Lt. Gen Frank M. Andrews:
USAF's Unsung Leader

By
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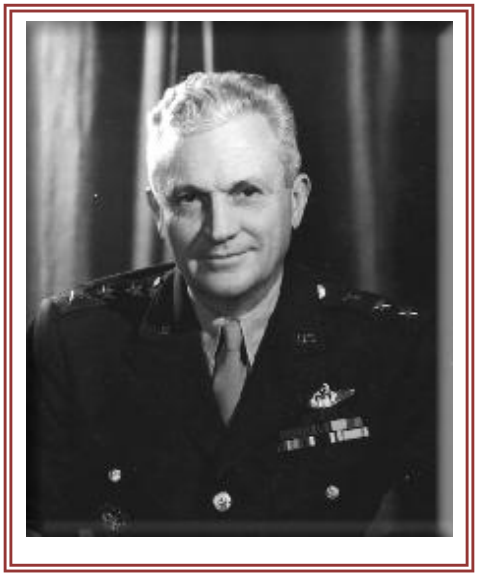
Rather than going back and forth from US Army Air Corps to US Army Air Forces according to the period under discussion, I'll use only the latter or its acronym (USAAF).



Lt Gen Frank M. Andrews

In 2003, historian, DeWitt S. Copp put it best in his article *Frank M. Andrews: Marshall's Airman*, when he wrote, "In war nothing is so commonplace as sudden death. But when the victim is a high-ranking officer of recognized brilliance, his loss can be shattering and the ironies of what could have been linger amidst the engulfing emptiness of unfulfilled promise." Copp was referring to the tragic and untimely death of Lieutenant General Frank M. Andrews, who was the Commander of European Theater of Operations (ETO) when he lost his life in May 1943, while trying to land his B-24 in Iceland during bad weather.

As an 87 (soon to be 88) year old used fighter pilot, who has spent the last 36 years rummaging through the history of Army Air Force and the WWII air war in Europe, I have developed a deep respect for the early USAAF leaders; such as "Billy" Mitchell, "Hap" Arnold, "Tooey" Spaatz, "Ira" Eaker, Hugh Knerr and others. During my research, three other WWII generals seem to rise above the rest: Generals George C. Marshall, Dwight D. Eisenhower and Frank M. Andrews. All three were not only great generals, but possessed a wide range of capabilities beyond their military talents. Marshall and Eisenhower continued their conspicuous service to America after hanging up their uniforms—but Andrews, who was every bit as talented and had performed as a distinguished senior military commander longer than either Marshall or Eisenhower—tragically lost his life before he reached the pinnacle of his career.

General George C. Marshall admired and respected Andrews and sought his advice on a host of important issues and selected him for vital joint military assignments normally reserved for ground officers with rising stars. At Andrews's memorial service, Marshall paid him one of the highest compliments any military leader could receive, when he said, "No Army produces more than a few great captains. General Andrews was undoubtedly one of these." Marshall also said in a note to Andrews's wife, "He was a great leader and in his post abroad was on his way to rendering a tremendous service to the Allied cause." Unfortunately, most Americans know next to nothing about Frank M. Andrews, although they see and hear his name weekly in the media—as our national and international leaders arrive and depart Andrews AFB in Washington DC.

General Douglas MacArthur first recognized Frank M. Andrews's talents in 1934, when the War Department and Army General Staff reluctantly gave the USAAF some central authority like the other army branches. They created an organization called General Headquarters Air Force (GHQAF) and assigned the USAAF's combat units to it. MacArthur selected Andrews to be its commander and promoted him from lieutenant colonel to brigadier general (he was soon promoted to Major General). Andrews was charged with the responsibility of building a credible USAAF fighting force and as such he became the de facto leader in the on going struggle with the anti-air elements of the War Department, Army General Staff and Navy—just as Billy Mitchell had in the 1920's.

Centralizing the control of USAAF combat units **was not the Army's idea**—it had long been sought by army airmen and only came after strong pressure from the American public forced the Congress and War Department to act. Before the establishment of a GHQAF, unlike other homogeneous army branches, air units were parceled out to the nine "territorial" Corps Commands. The 'territorial" commanders were ground officers, who knew nothing about air power, but each had their own idea how **their air units** should function.

To prevent the USAAF from gaining too much autonomy, the Army General Staff put the remaining USAAF functions (procurement, logistics and personnel) under the Chief of the Army Air Corps. Thus they divided USAAF in two parts with each of their commanders answerable to the Army Chief of Staff through his General Staff. Given the low priority assigned to air issues, resolution of minor problems could take an inordinate amount of time. It was at best a "Rube Goldberg" organization and a classic example of the Army's purposeful

mismanagement of the USAAF. But the Army's organizational "experts" referred to the unduly restrictive command structure and staff process as, "….salutary control by a beneficial general staff." **As bad as it was, it was better than what the Army airmen had before.**

Despite the organizational chasm, the talented Andrews hoped to work within the system and build a credible air force. Unfortunately, the strong anti-air sentiment within the War Department, Army General Staff and Navy that had provoked Mitchell in to going public eventually caused Andrews to do the same.

Here are just a few of the many examples of the type of treatment these two dedicated and patriotic American airmen had to face. In 1930, Congress finally authorized 2,320 aircraft for the USAAF, but the Army never requested adequate funding for them. As late as 1938, the USAAF possessed about 1,700 aircraft—most of which were obsolete. The USAAF's manning followed a similar pattern. For example, in 1933, only two branches of the Army's seven branches were short of officers—the Signal Corps needed 18 officers, while the USAAF was shorted 368 officers—about 25% of their authorized strength.

Probably the thing that provoked Mitchell was excessive pilot losses, because they had to fly WWI relics that were next to impossible to maintain—especially the engines. In 1920, engine failures occurred on about half of every flight and 69 pilots were killed that year—and in the next four years another 620 Army pilots lost their lives. Ground commanders said the losses were due to carelessness of the "fly boys," an unflattering term that still echoes in the hallowed halls of the Army.

The thing that forced Andrews to go outside the Army General Staff's yoke was his battle to get more B-17's. The General Staff had never wanted the B-17 and when the first aircraft crashed on its maiden demonstration flight in October 1935 at Wright Field, they increased their opposition. Because it was the best bomber in the world at the time, Andrews continued to employ his persuasive powers and worked the system hard and eventually 13 B-17's were purchased in 1937. But war clouds were on the horizon and Andrews wanted more B-17's. Germany, Italy and Japan were poised to gobble up much of the world and each had first rate air forces to help do the job. In 1935, Italy overran Ethiopia; in 1936 Spain's Civil War provided a testing ground for the air forces of the WWII combatants and in 1937 Japan invaded China. A year later, Hitler's saber rattling took on real meaning when he captured Czechoslovakia by **coercion.**

American Ambassadors, Hugh Wilson in Berlin and William Bullitt in Paris, advised President Franklin Delano Roosevelt that one of the main reasons the British and French backed away from defending Czechoslovakia was Germany's threat to unleash its superior air force. Consequently, in November 1938, President Roosevelt, a long time proponent of the Navy, finally suggested that the U.S. start building an air force. Congress authorized more aircraft and people for the USAAF, but the anti-air constituencies managed to slow the USAAF's growth by under funding the programs.

Despite the determined opposition, Andrews continued his effort to display the B-17's advanced capability to the public, hoping to gain support for more of them. Probably the best known demonstration was the well publicized 1938 interception of the US bound Italian cruise ship "Rex" about 700 miles out to sea. It became front page news around the world. The Navy immediately complained to the War Department and Army and the USAAF was ordered to remain within a 100 miles of the US coast and their contract for more B-17's was cancelled. The USAAF was finally forced to buy the **cheaper, less capable and obsolete B-18,** with the rationale that more aircraft could be purchased for the same amount of money (When the US entered WWII, the less than the best B-18's proved to be useless in combat).

In September 1938, Air Corps Chief, General Oscar Westover was killed and Andrews, who was recognized as the most capable person at the time, was offered the job with the proviso that he stop lobbying for more B-17's. But Andrews believed that the nation's security was at stake and refused to give up his fight for more B-17's and "Hap" Arnold was given the job.

With his tour as commander of GHQAF nearing the end, Andrews publicly declared the US had a "sixth rate air force." Although his action was less provocative than Mitchell's, he was punished in a similar manner. When his tour ended in March 1939, he was reduced from major general to full colonel, transferred to San Antonio, Texas and given the same career ending job that Mitchell had been given 14 years earlier.

In his 2002 article *Frank M. Andrews: Marshall's Airman*, DeWitt S. Copp said regarding Andrews's banishment to Texas, "When Andy Andrews, wearing mufti, was given a farewell review at Langley, there were few dry eyes. The mail that flooded in, reflecting sorrow, anger, frustration, and praise for him, came from admirers high and low, military and civilian. Truth be known, Andrews was not all

that downcast by the vindictive action. He was confident that his isolation would be of short duration, partly because he could see the direction of world events and partly, perhaps, because he knew that Marshall would not let him go to seed."

In 1938 Andrews had befriended and won the respect of the evenhanded George C. Marshall, soon after Marshall had been appointed Chief of Plans for the Army. First, Andrews briefed him in Washington DC about the GHQAF. Then he invited Marshall to accompany him on a nine day inspection tour of GHQAF's combat units, air depots and supporting aircraft factories on the West Coast (including Boeing where the B-17 was made). This was Marshall's first in depth exposure to the USAAF—and it was an eye-opener. He was impressed by the professionalism of the personnel in the USAAF combat units and depots and by the B-17. He also gained an appreciation for the long lead times required to design and build an aircraft, as well as the extensive training programs that were essential for the pilots, aircrews and maintenance personnel.

Andrews spoke openly to Marshall as they flew from one unit to the next and covered a wide range of subjects, including his long held desire for greater autonomy for the USAAF. The open-minded Marshall was impressed by Andrews's broad knowledge of his job, international and national issues, as well as his grasp of the fundamentals of ground and airpower. Undoubtedly, Marshall also saw what the airmen who had served with Andrews had seen for years—the rare qualities of a natural born leader who was a great pilot and could navigate the tangled morass of military politics (General Ira Eaker said that Andrews was considered one of the best pilots in the USAAF and everyone believed he was destined to be one of the US's greatest military leaders).

In July 1939, President Roosevelt selected George C. Marshall as his new Army Chief of Staff and one of Marshall's first recorded actions was to recall Andrews to Washington DC from his banishment. Then over strong objections from his civilian bosses and the former Army Chief of Staff, Marshall promoted Andrews to brigadier general and assigned him as the Army's Assistant Chief of Staff for Training and Operations (A-3), which was the highly sought "plum" of the General Staff.

Marshall was one of the few ground generals who had the vision to see that airpower would play a big part in future wars and that the US needed a first rate air force. Moreover, while Marshall was Chief of plans he also had noted the bias against airpower by the Army General Staff, as well as the lack of airmen on the

staff. Marshall believed the brilliant and persuasive Andrews, armed with his vast experience, 12 years in the Calavry and extensive command experience in the USAAF, was the best man available to establish up-to-date training programs, institute revamped operational policies and build up the Army's ground and air forces. Moreover, Marshall knew he could depend on Andrews to successfully counter the long standing and well entrenched anti-air elements on the General Staff and do it with minimal disruption.

War broke out in Europe one month after Andrews took the A-3 job and complicated his work, because the Army had to share their critically short supply of military hardware with Britain and France. Nevertheless, Andrews performed admirably and met or exceeded Marshall's expectations for the next 15 months.

Andrews would have served longer as the Army's A-3, but the French capitulation to Germany and deteriorating relations with Japan heightened concerns about the defense of North and South America. The US's number one hemispheric concern was the vulnerability of the Panama Canal Zone, which had a weak and outdated defense posture and "out-of-touch" commanders. Marshall knew the Canal Zone was urgently in need of an organizational overhaul and a new innovative commander. Once again, his first choice for this most critical job was Andrews. In October 1940, Marshall a deliberate man who believed that melting ice could make it easier to break later, first assigned Andrews as the commander of the Panama Canal Army Air Forces to permit him to learn the players and size-up the problem before becoming Caribbean Commander.

Andrews, after studying the defense problem, tried unsuccessfully to persuade the sitting Caribbean Commander, an artillery general, to switch from a predominately artillery coastal defense plan and combine it with a fighter air defense net that reached well beyond the coast. Marshall followed Andrews' work closely and finally removed the artillery general in July 1941. He promoted Andrews to Lieutenant General and made him the commander of all army ground and air forces in the Caribbean. Andrews was the first airman to be promoted to Lieutenant General and also the first airman to hold a joint command. He soon formed a topnotch ground and air team that won him high praise. Hap Arnold was so impressed with Andrews USAAF organization in the Caribbean that he recommended other USAAF overseas commands pattern their organizations after it. (During this time, General MacArthur was also aware of General Andrews's outstanding work in the Caribbean and requested him to be his air force

commander in the Pacific, but Andrews was already a theater commander like MacArthur and that would have been a step backward for him. More importantly, Marshall had much bigger things in mind for Andrews).

Six months after Andrews moved to the Panama Canal Zone, Marshall eliminated the Army General Staff's "Rube Goldberg" organization and increased the USAAF's autonomy. He created the Army Air Force and made General Hap Arnold its leader. At the same time, Marshall put the Army Air forces on the same level with Army ground forces and saw to it that Arnold had a seat on the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, as well as on the Combined Chiefs of Staff with the British. Marshall's actions were undoubtedly influenced by his past discussions with Andrews.

On 20 October 1942, Marshall called Andrews to Washington DC and notified him that he was to become the Commander of USAAF forces in the Middle East (USAFIME). Although USAFIME was an important command, it had only four bomber groups and a scattering of support units and certainly wasn't a command that required the talents of a man like Andrews. I'm convinced that it was another deliberate move by Marshall, similar to Andrews's initial job assignment in Panama. I would guess that Marshall first wanted Andrews to be in place in Europe or the Mediterranean for something bigger and this was a good spot for him to start.

Before the January 1943 Casablanca Conference, Churchill was still dragging his heels about invading Northern France and wanted to strike through "Europe's soft underbelly" in the Balkans. He also was in favor of the 8th AF switching to night bombing like the RAF. Marshall wanted to hold fast on the invasion of Northern France and to continue the daylight bombing effort. To help counter Churchill's opposition, General Marshall wanted a strong American commander in Britain to keep both issues on track. As a result, during the Casablanca Conference Marshall announced the formation of two theaters of operations for the US—Africa/Mediterranean and Europe. Marshall named General Dwight Eisenhower as the commander in Africa/Mediterranean and Andrews was made the commander of the European Theater of Operations (ETO). Andrews would command all the American ground and air forces and plan for the D-Day invasion of France. (It's interesting to note that Marshall informed Andrews about his new job well in advance of the Casablanca Conference). Andrews' new job was probably the most important American military command at the time.

In his 2003 article about Andrews, Dewitt S. Copp covered the reason for Andrews selection as the commander of the ETO, "….Marshall wanted a commander in London who had the qualities of leadership and administrative ability necessary to direct a buildup toward that end. He also wanted an airman on a high enough level to keep the bomber offensive on track—someone who could cooperate with the British but not be swayed by their adroitness and charm. Perhaps the most intriguing point in the sudden shift was that Andrews knew it was coming even before he received a message from Marshall asking him to be in Casablanca within forty-eight hours…."

General Andrews' new job put him on center stage, but he was killed in Iceland a few months later before the spot lights could shine on him. There are two schools of thought regarding the reason for Andrews's flight to Iceland. One was that he had gone on an inspection trip to review his Icelandic forces. The other school of thought was that Andrews had been summoned by Marshall to attend the Trident Conference in Washington. If he was returning to the US for the Trident Conference, it's a very significant piece of evidence that points to the importance of his future role in the war in Europe.

Again in his 2003 paper about Andrews, Copp provides excellent rationale to support the latter position. He wrote, "There are those who believe that Andrews's flight to Iceland was the intended first stop on a secret summons to Washington by Marshall. In view of the relationship between the two and the circumstances of the moment, the belief does not seem illogical. The Trident Conference was about to begin in Washington. Hap Arnold had suffered a heart attack and would not be able to attend. Many issues thought resolved at Casablanca were coming unstuck, not the least of which was the Combined Bomber Offensive. That Marshall would want Andrews present for matters dealing with the invasion buildup and the British refusal to be tied down to it, makes sense. Yet, there is no official record of such a recall, **even though Andrews's widow was left by Marshall with the impression that such was the case**…."

During the research for my 17 February 2011 article for *The Wright Stuff*, I found what I consider to be very credible evidence to support the theory that Andrews had been summoned for the Trident Conference. It was in the 93d Bomb Group's unit history, the group that provided the B-24 and crew for Andrews' flight on 3 May 1943. The 93rd Bomb Group was commanded by a 1931 graduate of

West Point, Colonel Edward J. "Ted" Timberlake who was a close friend of General Andrews (Timberlake later became a Lieutenant General).

The 93rd Bomb Group history was written by Carroll (Cal) Stewart who had been a journalist before entering the service. Stewart joined the 93rd as a private, started a weekly newspaper for the group, eventually won a commission and later became Timberlake's aide-de-camp. He was in a unique position to observe all levels of the group's activities with the trained eyes and ears of a journalist. In his history, he wrote that General Andrews paid a visit to the group in late April 1943 and made arrangements for his 3 May flight, telling Timberlake he had been summoned back to Washington. A B-24 crew and their aircraft "Hot Stuff" had finished their combat tour and were selected to fly Andrews back to the States. But only seven of the crew members went on the flight, because of the size of General Andrews traveling party. The bombardier, Robert T. Jacobson, the copilot and tail gunner remained behind. Jacobson later confirmed Stewart's version of the reason for Andrews's trip.

Making an inspection trip to Iceland doesn't seem plausible, because the small number of forces stationed in Iceland and their relative importance to the very critical strategic bombing campaign and build up of D-Day forces in Britain. The inspection trip to Iceland appears to be more of a cover story to conceal the real purpose of Andrews's trip. A much stronger case can be made that Andrews was summoned by Marshall to attend the Trident Conference. That being the case, it doesn't seem like much of a stretch to assume that Andrews would have been a major player in the war in Europe and another of America's five star generals.

It's too late to make Frank M. Andrews a five star general, but it's not too late to promote him to a four star general on the retired list.

Brigadier General Richard M. Baughn entered the Army Air Force aviation cadet training program in January 1943 and received his pilot wings and commission as second lieutenant in April 1944 and retired from the US Air Force in July 1975. Baughn was born in Council Bluffs, Iowa in 1923, graduated from Abraham Lincoln High School and received a BS from the University of Maryland. His military schools include the USAF Air Tactical School, the Armed Forces Staff College and Great Britain's senior military school, The Imperial Defence College. He is a command pilot with more than 7,600 flying hours, including more than 5,000 in jet fighter aircraft. He has flown the P-40; P-51; P-47; F-80; RF-80; T-33; F-84B, F, and G; F-86E,F and H; F-100C,D and F; F-104A, C and D; F-105D and F; F-4C,D and E;

A-6; F-111A and E; FB-111; KC-135; Meteor; Hawker Hunter, Lightning and 14 other types of military aircraft. He flew combat in P-51's with the 8th AF during WWII and in 1965-66 he flew three temporary F-105 combat tours, one at Tahkli and two at Korat, Thailand, before completing a full F-105 combat tour in 1966, as the commander of the 13th TFS. In addition to a full complement of F-105 fighters, the 13th TFS was also assigned all of Korat's F-100 and F-105 Wild Weasels and about half of Baughn's missions were flown with them. In June 1974 General Baughn was appointed deputy defense attaché, Defense Attaché Office, Saigon, Republic of Vietnam, his last assignment prior to his retirement. His decorations include the Silver Star, Legion of Merit, three Distinguished Flying Crosses, Bronze Star Medal, 15 Air Medals and two Air Force Commendation Medals. His book "The Hellish Vortex: Between Breakfast and Dinner," a carefully researched historical novel about a WWII P-51 pilot in the 8th AF, won a 2008 Eric Hoffer Notable Award for fiction and a 2008 honorable mention award for fiction from The Writer's Digest. The Hellish Vortex is available at Amazon.com in both paperback and electronically in Kindle.